

DHS Report to the Child Welfare Advisory Committee (CWAC) December 15, 2008

The following are update items that may be of greatest interest to the Committee. For each of these items, the Committee may want to discuss how they want to be updated or engaged.

Waterloo Child Protection Center Satellite

- On 10-31-08, Gene Gessow, DHS Director, signed a memorandum of understanding between the Department of Human Services and St. Luke's. The agreement outlines work activities and a timeline to complete a feasibility study. The feasibility study is designed to determine community needs, and get community involvement to ensure the support needed to maintain the program once established.
- During the month of November, St. Luke's has been recruiting a coordinator who will be responsible for coordinating community and steering committee meetings with representatives from Allen Hospital, St. Luke's and DHS. The group is also recruiting community members to serve on the committees.

Drug Testing Protocol

- DHS submitted the attached report regarding the process for drug testing of a person responsible for the care of a child in child abuse cases to the General Legislature on 12-1-08. The report examines effectiveness, consistency across the state, and funding.
- The Judicial Department, Department of Public Health and Department of Human Services are reviewing a draft Drug Testing "How to Guide" for families that are before the Juvenile Court for child welfare issues, in which parental substance abuse is an issue. The draft Guide was developed as part of the In-Depth Technical Assistance (IDTA) Project through the National Resource Center for Substance Abuse and Child Welfare. It provides a framework for determining when to test, type of test, frequency, and how to incorporate positive or negative test results into decision-making. Once the three Departments have reviewed, it will go to the IDTA Advisory Committee for their review. Once the Guide is finalized, the protocol will be initially tested in the Parents and Children Together (PACT) dependency court sites in Wapello, Polk, Linn, Scott, Woodbury, Cherokee and Ida Counties. Ultimately, this protocol will replace current DHS protocols.

Community Care Contract

- DHS received comments from 2 organizations or individuals external to DHS, as well as DHS staff, in response to our request for comment on the draft RFP. The current contract for Community Care ends on 12-31-09, although referrals under the contract will end 6-30-09. (The contract extends an additional 6 months after referrals end, in order to allow for final performance payments).

Parent Partners

- Attached is an update on the Parent Partners program, summarizing the first year of implementation.

Parent-Child/Family Interaction Guidelines

- DHS and the Safety Plan/FSRP contractors formed a joint workgroup chaired by Wendy Rickman (DHS) and Chris Secrist Mertz (Mid-Iowa Family Therapy) to oversee implementation of the Family Interaction guidelines for parent child interaction when children are in foster care. The workgroup is responsible for developing a timeline and plan to implement the guidelines statewide no later than 6-30-09. The workgroup is responsible for testing and refining the guidelines, communication with key stakeholders, training, and identification of resources needed to complete implementation.

Preparation for Adult Living

- The PAL caseload was 299 as of the end of October 2008, with an average monthly population of 307 for SFY 2009 year-to-date. (At the end of August, it was 317 and 310 respectively). The initial budget for SFY 2009 funded an average monthly caseload of 260 youth. DHS has supplemented the initial budget with one-time-only Chafee funds and has worked with the Aftercare Network to make contract adjustments that would support an average monthly caseload of 311 youth.

Disproportionality

- On 11-20-08, DHS Director Gene Gessow the DHS Des Moines Service Area announced a campaign called "Help Make No Difference" to reduce racial disparities in the child welfare system. This project is focused on engaging the community to work in partnership with DHS to stop disproportionate treatment of children in the child welfare system in the Polk County Community. Go to www.HelpMakeNoDifference.com for additional information about the effort.
- The 7th Annual DMC Resource Center and Minority Youth and Families Initiative Conference was held on December 3 – 5, 2008. DHS is a co-sponsor through the Minority Youth and Families Initiative (MYFI) developed as part of the Better Results for Kids child welfare redesign. DHS and community partners presented updates on the 2 MYFI projects in Des Moines (addressing African American children and families) and Sioux City (addressing Native American children and families). Both Elevate and Dare to Dream also presented sessions. Over 200 participants representing Juvenile Court Services, DHS, private agencies and community members attended the conference.

Education and Foster Care Summit

- On 12-5-08, the Court, DHS, and DOE invited representatives of the CWAC Subcommittee on Education and Foster Care, and the Children's Justice State Council Subcommittee on Education and Foster Care, and Legislators working on this issue to meet with a consultant from the American Bar Association Legal Center on Education and Foster Care. The goal of the invitation only meeting was to assist the various groups in coordinating efforts to improve education outcomes for children in foster care. The group identified a set of next steps and agreed to meet again.

Foster Care Review Pilots

- The General Assembly included language allowing the Child Advocacy Board (CAB) to implement up to 6 pilot approaches to foster care review. Marc Baty, Cedar Rapids Service Area Manager, has been working with the local CAB staff to develop several pilots in the Cedar Rapids Service Area. The first, in Washington County, will focus on non-licensed relative placements and is scheduled to begin 1-1-09. Other pilots being considered would focus on disproportionality and families in which substance abuse is an issue.

Child Welfare Provider Training

- DHS and the Coalition signed the contract for the Coalition to administer the \$250,000 child welfare provider training allocation in early November 2008. In November, the Coalition provided the first training offering – mental health first aid; 21 child welfare provider supervisors attended. The inaugural training went very well. The supervisors indicated they would like to see this session offered in the various service areas for the staff they supervise.

Shelter Care Emergency Services

- DHS sent the attached memo sent to the DHS Service Area Managers (SAMs), Chief Juvenile Court Officers (CJCOs) and shelter care providers on 11-21-08. Alternative child welfare emergency services will be a major agenda item at the 12-12-08 juvenile shelter care providers meeting.

Group Care RFP

- On 12-8-08, DHS issued an update on the group care RFP (attached) via e-mail to a wide distribution list. The update will also be posted on the DHS website, Better Results for Kids page.

Legislation on Options for Growth Mechanism for Provider Reimbursement

- DHS held the final meeting with provider representatives on 11-25-08 to review a draft of the report to the General Assembly. The group reviewed options for analyzing current provider costs, a mechanism to model costs based on desired outcomes and market data, and options to address annual changes in costs.
- DHS' goal is to complete the report and submit it to the General Assembly by the end of December 2008.

Rural Homeless Youth Grant

- This grant is for communities with a population of less than 20,000 and have a provider with a federal transitional living (housing) grant through Health & Human Services - Family & Youth Services Bureau. The grant is \$1 million over a 5-year period. The first year funds have been received for a planning process to select the provider that will help build community and statewide capacity for serving this population. The FYSB organizations in Iowa are Foundation 2 (Cedar Rapids service area), United Action for Youth (Iowa City rural area), and Youth and Shelter Services (Des Moines and Ames area) and all of them serve rural communities, all are participating.

HUD grant

- On November 24, 2008, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued the 2008 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

inviting public housing authorities nationwide to apply for a portion of \$20 million in new Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers the Family Unification Program (FUP). FUP provides homeless and poorly housed families involved with the child welfare system with decent and affordable housing and supportive services in order to safely reunite them with their children. FUP vouchers are also available to prevent homelessness among former foster youth. DHS has shared this information with our local offices and with the Iowa HUD office. Public Housing Authorities have until 1-28-09 to submit an application.

DHS Provider Partnership Steering Committee

- DHS and Safety Plan/FSRP¹ contractors developed a “Child Welfare Partners Committee” to serve as a steering committee to guide our efforts to develop a stronger partnership towards improving outcomes for the children and families we serve. Sue Pitts-Fischer (Lutheran Services of Iowa) and Mary Nelson will co-chair the Committee, which includes 14 members – 7 representing providers and 7 representing DHS. DHS has arranged for Charlotte McCullough to spend a day with the Committee on 12-17-08 to develop a shared statement of purpose, as well as specific workgroups to address areas identified by DHS and providers. The goal is for this Steering Committee’s work to extend to all child welfare contracts and not just Safety Plan/FSRP services. Concurrently, DHS and the Safety Plan/FSRP contractors are working together to implement a set of guidelines for parent-child interaction (see separate item).

Child and Family Service Review (CFSR)

- Attached is the most recent quarterly data on DHS performance on the CFSR outcomes.
- DHS also completed the last of 8 “mini-CFSR” reviews for calendar 2008. The mini-CFSR reviews involve full replication of the federal CFSR stakeholder focus groups and interview protocols, as well as full replication of the onsite case review tool for 4 randomly selected cases in each of the 8 sites. DHS will publish a summary of common themes from the 8 reviews in January 2009. DHS has identified the following preliminary themes regarding strengths and areas needing improvement (ANI).
 - Strengths: Family team meetings, community collaboration, safety outcomes, quality and frequency of worker visits with children, court leadership and oversight, child safety, PAL program
 - ANI: Engagement of fathers and non-custodial parents, quality and frequency of visits with parents, assessment of need and matching services to needs, and documentation and provision of medical care and access to dental care, Indian Child Welfare Act inquiry and compliance
 - Overarching issues: case workers are committed to doing what needs to be done to address the needs of families, transportation barriers, rural practice barriers, and challenges of transition to changes in child welfare system (e.g., foster care licensing and recruitment, remedial services)
- In December, DHS will publish a Practice Bulletin on Permanency for Teens accessible at http://www.dhs.iowa.gov/Consumers/Child_Welfare/BR4K/Practice_Bulletins/Practice%20Bulletins.html

¹ Family Safety Risk and Permanency

- The CFSR Operations Team (a DHS/Court/JCS committee overseeing Iowa's CFSR preparation and program improvement work) has been reviewing the use of "another planned permanent living arrangement" (APPLA) as a permanency goal for children in foster care. APPLA is often used as a "default" goal for children in the child welfare system, but denies real permanency for children.

Fostering Connections for Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (FCSIAA)

- The FCSIAA was signed into law on 10-8-08. Highlights of the new legislation include: health oversight and coordination, educational stability, options for subsidized guardianship, Fostering Connections grants, Tribal access to IV-E funding, re-authorization of Adoption Incentives, de-linking adoption subsidy from AFDC income requirements, and transitional plans for youth aging out of foster care.
- DHS Child and Family Services Division staff have been analyzing the impact of this new legislation and beginning development of implementation plans. We have identified 4 areas where we have requested state legislation for Iowa to come into compliance with the federal legislation. These areas include:
 - Due diligence to identify and notify relatives within 30 days of a child's placement in foster care
 - Assurances that school age title IV-E recipients are full-time students
 - Case plan inclusion of a plan for educational stability of the child while in foster care
 - Case plan inclusion of a transition plan for youth emancipating from foster care
- The Child Welfare Stakeholder Panel provided input on implementation of the new legislation at their most recent meeting and we are planning to continue utilizing this group to identify implementation issues and options as we move forward.